

Remarks/Arguments

Claims 1-6 are pending in the Application.

Claim 5 was withdrawn without traverse in a Response To Restriction/Election Requirement mailed December 23, 2005.

The Examiner objected to the drawings under 37 C.F.R. 1.83(a) for not showing every feature of the invention specified in the claims (specifically, the instrument panel, covering, inflatable air bag device and weakening groove comprising a V-shaped configuration). A new sheet including **FIGS. 4** and **5** is attached to this amendment to comply with the Examiner's objection. It illustrates the features of claim 1 for which the Examiner requested an illustration. Such features were already identified in the specification, and no new matter has been entered.

In addition, the specification has been amended as appropriate to now reference to **FIGS. 4** and **5** and the various features. The amendments to the specification only include the addition of reference numerals in the appropriate section to identify the features, or a reference to **FIGS. 4** and **5** themselves. Accordingly, once again, no new matter has been entered.

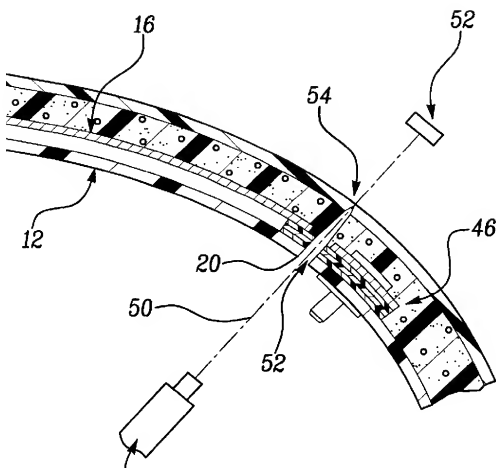
Turning to the claim rejections, the Examiner has rejected claims 1 and 6 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hazell, et al. (United States Patent No. 6,070,901). The Examiner referenced FIG. 3 for the proposition that Hazell disclosed a double-angle V-shaped configuration.

Independent claims 1 and 6 have been amended to recite that "said weakening groove has sides and said V-shaped configuration prevents healing of said sides back together". See page 4, lines 1-3 and page 5, lines 11-13 for support. Accordingly, no

new matter has been entered. In addition, claims 1 and 6 have been amended to simply clarify that the weakening groove is in the covering or cover skin. No new matter has been entered. Finally, claims 1 and 6 have been amended to recite that they are “knife-cut” and support may be found at page 4, lines 1-10 which disclose that one may use a knife-blade having a double angle design which allows for removal of sufficient material from the tear seam to prevent healing of the sides of the groove back together. Again, no new matter has been entered.

Hazell, et al. appears to be directed at an instrument panel wherein a high intensity light beam penetrates the substrate and foam layers as well as partially penetrating the cover layer to form a fracturable opening path for an air bag. This reference does not teach or suggest that the panel include a V-shape groove or that the V-shape groove comprise a double angled shape where **angle A** is less than **angle B**. **FIG. 3** of '901, referenced by the Examiner, shows a cutting path **54** formed by a laser beam and not a V-shaped configuration where **angle A** is less than **angle B** (see pending claims 1 and 6). For the convenience of the Examiner, **FIG. 3** has been expanded and reproduced below, and it can be seen that it does not show a double-angle V-shaped configuration in the covering or cover skin. This is not surprising since the reference relies upon the use of a laser beam and a laser beam would not cut a double-angled V-shaped configuration. Accordingly, cover **14** in U.S. 6,070,901 does not disclose or suggest the features of claims 1 and 6 herein. In addition, the U.S. '901 reference also fails to teach or suggest any configuration wherein a weakening groove has “sides and said V-shaped configuration prevents healing of said side back together.” See, amended

claims 1 and 6. Furthermore, the U.S. '901 reference, as it relies upon laser, does not teach or suggest a knife cut groove.



The Examiner also specifically rejected dependent claims 2-4 over the U.S. '901 reference, discussed above, under 35 USC 103. As an initial matter, given the distinctions noted above for independent claim 1, it is believed that the rejection of dependent claims 2-4 have been fully addressed.

It may also be noted that dependent claims 2-4 recite specific values for **angle A** and **angle B**. Again, Hazell, et al. is silent as to the shape and angles of the cutting path **54**. In addition, the Examiner has stated that "additionally Applicant has not stated that having the angles at these particular angles solves any particular problem" (see page 4, item 7 of the Office Action mailed March 8, 2006).

This is not believed to be the case. At page 3, lines 5-9 of the application, it is disclosed that a skin material forming an invisible **tear seam may heal or stick together** if an insufficient amount of material is removed when the tear seam is formed. Page 3, lines 19-20 state that it is desirable to provide a knife-blade design that **prevents healing** of the tear seam. Page 4, lines 1-2 state that it is an object of the invention to provide a knife-blade having a double angle design which allows for removal of sufficient material from the tear seam to **prevent healing of the sides of the groove back together**. Page 5, lines 1-8 describe the preferred angles to **prevent healing**. At page 5, lines 11-13, the application recites that "[i]n other words, the skin material is **not prone to heal to itself** after the cutting operation, **by virtue of the double angle configuration**." (emphasis added.) Furthermore, claim 1 has been amended to recite "**wherein said weakening groove has sides and said V-shaped configuration prevents healing of said sides back together**. It is therefore submitted that the outstanding rejection of dependent claims 2-4 have been addressed and that they separately satisfy the conditions of patentability under 35 USC 103.

Claims 1-4 and 6 were also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Takahashi (United States Patent No. 6,612,607) in view of Bromer, et al. (United States Patent No. 3,761,374).

Takahashi appears to be directed at a trim member having an air bag door portion, with a tear portion formed in the air bag door portion. A groove may be provided in the door portion as well. FIGS. 16, 19, 34 and 35 disclose a tear portion 64 in the skin 62 in either the inner or outer surface. The reference does not teach or suggest a groove having a V-shaped configuration where angle A is less than angle B. The Examiner admits such at page 4 of the Office Action mailed March 8, 2006, "Takahashi does not show the exact double configuration as claimed."

The Examiner next turns to Bromer, et al. Bromer, et al ('374) appears to be directed at an improved cutting tool (razor blade) shaped by ion bombardment. The Examiner stated that it would have been obvious to have modified the teachings of Takahashi with the teachings of Bromer et al "to provide the double angle V-shaped groove in order to provide a simplified groove." Applicants have a few comments.

First, as the Examiner may know, obviousness cannot be established by combining prior art to produce the claimed invention absent some teaching or suggestion supporting the combination. The mere fact that the prior art may be modified in the manner suggested by the Examiner does not make the modification obvious unless the prior art suggested the desirability of the modification. See, *Ex parte Gottling*, (B.P.A.I. 2005 (unpublished)).

The above being the case, it is submitted that there is no motivation to combine the cited references. Bromer, et al. is directed at a razor blade for shaving. See, col 2, lines 40-43. Takahashi is silent as to the problem of healing or sticking together of the sides of a cut groove in a cover skin for an instrument panel. In addition, Takahashi, when describing tear portion 64, states that it is "formed" on the reverse face of the skin

62. Such limited teaching fails to inform as to how the skin might be weakened, much less cut with a specified configuration for any particular advantage.

Moreover, the motivation advanced by the Examiner for combining the references was that one would do so in order to “provide a simplified groove.” A “simplified groove” is not what is recited in claims 1 and 6. In fact, it is reasonable to note that in a cover skin for a component of the interior of a vehicle passenger compartment, the feature of a knife cut double angle V-shaped groove is more complex than a single angle groove.

In consideration of the amendments to the claims and the remarks hereinabove, Applicant respectfully submits that all claims currently pending in the application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Allowance at an early date is respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner deems personal contact is necessary, please contact the undersigned attorney at (603) 668-6560.

In the event there are any fee deficiencies or additional fees are payable, please charge them (or credit any overpayment) to our Deposit Account No. 50-2121.

Respectfully submitted,

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